

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Town Centres
2.	Date:	29th November 2010
3.	Title:	Minster Gardens Public Realm (former All Saints Buildings, Westgate Demonstrator Project - Site 2), Rotherham Town Centre Boston Castle Ward 2
4.	Programme Area:	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

To seek approval from the Cabinet Member for Town Centres for the proposed scheme.

6. Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member for Town Centres approves the proposed Minster Gardens Public Realm project as detailed in this report.

7. Proposals and Details

The site is currently vacant (temporarily being used as site establishment for the Minster Yard project). The most recent buildings on site being All Saints Buildings; a mix of retail units at ground floor level with two storeys of office space above. This was an unattractive building constructed in two phases during the mid and post war period, which was demolished in 2008.

The original proposal for the site was to replace the old building with a new contemporary office / retail development for which detailed plans were being progressed. However, once demolition of the building commenced, impressive new views of both the church and Imperial Buildings were revealed for the first time in a generation. Public opinion changed regarding the use of the site, with calls for the views to be retained as an asset to the Town. This support for the site's redevelopment as a public space was ratified by the Council's Cabinet decision in July 2009.

The Council, therefore, investigated the use of the site as amenity / public space and engaged with CABE to justify the decision and ensure the best possible scheme is promoted.

The proposal as part of the wider Rotherham Renaissance, is to create an urban green space that is complimentary to the existing All Saints Square and Minster Yard. The project has been positively influenced by the site's prominent location and proximity of the adjacent listed buildings (the Minster and Imperial Buildings) and will protect and enhance their settings.

The creation of a new destination at the western edge of the Town Centre will also be of benefit to the surrounding businesses by increasing visitor numbers and footfall to the area.

Additionally, the provision of new open space for Town Centre residents in Imperial Buildings, Old Market and Keppel Wharf and from Living over the Shops (LOTS) initiatives will be a further bonus.

The space has not been designed specifically for events but will be suitably flexible to enable it to accommodate occasional events as appropriate.

The design has been developed to encompass the entire footprint of the demolished building, with the retention of exiting surrounding footpaths and provision of new desire line footpaths allowing convenient and easy to use routes. The site is naturally sloping and inclusive access will be via gently sloping paths and steps. The proposed paths allow for access to each road adjacent to the site with a central focal events space, seating area and informal grass terraces.

Views both in and out of the site from all angles are protected, promoting a safe feeling within the urban green space.

The design has been developed to retain the existing trees surrounding the site and promote further planting of trees, shrubs and wildflower meadows, enhancing biodiversity and habitat variety within an urban setting. Reclamation of stored

material from previous town centre projects has also influenced a sustainable and economical approach to the design.

The following Drawings are attached as an Appendix:

Drawing No, L4753/2-102 Sketch Proposals

Drawing No. L4753/2-201 Hardworks General Arrangement Plan

A Planning Application for “Change of use” of the land has been submitted to the Council.

Works on site are programmed to commence in January 2011, with completion scheduled for end of July 2011.

8. Finance

The total budget available for delivering the project is £331,833. This funding is secured and comprises a mixture of External and Council sources as detailed below:

Funding Source	Amount (£)
Yorkshire Forward	36,870
LAA Reward Grant	158,500
WNF	110,000
LABGI	26,463
TOTAL	331,833

This budget includes for all planning, design and management fees, construction, highway and landscape works.

Following completion of the project, maintenance responsibilities associated with the improvements will remain with the Council. The surrounding footpaths are adopted highway and are maintained by Streetpride. It is not intended to adopt the internal footpaths which traverse the site. Lighting to these footpaths is currently at design stage. The lighting columns, ducting, cabling and service connections will form part of the construction scheme. Future ongoing maintenance (excluding vandalism) and running costs being met by the payment of a commuted sum of £2120.

The works contract will include a 3 year aftercare and replacement planting allowance. Beyond this 3 year period, the costs of maintaining the scheme will be absorbed by Streetpride.

It has been agreed with colleagues in Streetpride, that Minster Gardens will be designated as “Civic Area “, and will, therefore, be included within the already established monthly inspection programme. It is proposed that the site will fall in to the “Silver Zone” in terms of on going maintenance (cleaning and litter picking etc). As the site is additional to existing commitments, Streetpride have indicated that this will cost in the region of £4,000 per annum.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The works will be carried out by the same Streetpride delivery team currently working on the Minster Yard project. The new contract is due to commence immediately after completion of these works. Any significant delays to the original project could potentially impact on the Minster Gardens programme.

Planning permission needs to be secured for the Change of Use of the land.

Estimates are based on detailed site investigation, knowledge of the site and previous experience. Any cost over-runs will be managed by cost control mechanisms and re-design solutions to keep within existing budgets. This may impact and reduce the design specification on some items.

On-going maintenance costs of £4000 per annum for cleaning and litter picking, together with the one-off commuted sum payment of £2120 for lighting maintenance and running costs need to be picked up by the Council.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The scheme will contribute to the 'Rotherham Achieving', 'Rotherham Proud' 'Rotherham Alive' and 'Rotherham Proud' themes of the Community Strategy by:

Providing an excellent town centre through the delivery of the town centre Renaissance in a way that will stimulate and retain investment;

Improving the perceptions of both residents and non-residents by raising the profile and image of the borough to support economic regeneration.

Helping Rotherham to celebrate its history and heritage – building on the past, and creating and welcoming the new.

Being designed to be an attractive public space which is safe, clean, green and well maintained

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Delegated Powers Meeting 2nd February 2005, Property Board 16th March 2005 and Regeneration Board 13th April 2005 consulted and approved the Westgate Demonstrator Project master plan which included proposals for the demolition and redevelopment of the former All Saints Building.

Cabinet on the 2nd November 2005 approved the selection of the Iliad Group as the preferred developer based on proposals which include the demolition and redevelopment of All Saints Building.

The Delegated Powers Meeting on the 31st July 2006 approved the strategy for securing vacant possession of the All Saints Building ahead of demolition of the building.

Cabinet on 1st July 2009 approved the redevelopment of this key town centre site for new public realm.

Consultation has taken place with surrounding local businesses and residents, Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance (ROAR), Various Council Teams including the Visitor Information Centre, Business and Retail Investment, and Development Control.

Contact Name: Bob Taylor, Project Officer,
Ext 23820 bob.taylor@rotherham.gov.uk